



News from the Center for the Book

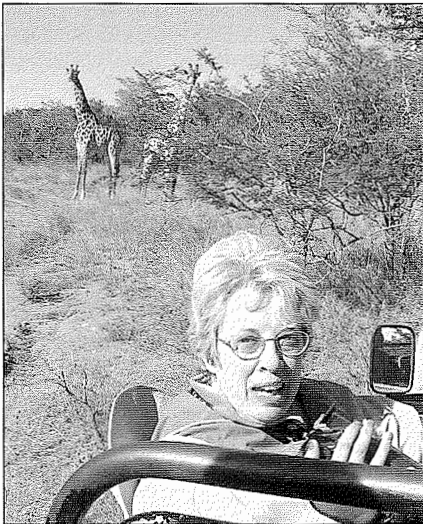
Center Leads Trip to South Africa

By JOHN Y. COLE

The link between democracy and reading was a theme for a study tour to South Africa led by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress last spring. "South Africa: A Journey to Promote Reading & Literacy" focused on reading and literacy promotion efforts currently under way in schools, libraries and educational institutions throughout South Africa and took place during the 10th anniversary year of the new South African democracy. Participants learned about the "new" South Africa directly from their South African counterparts, sharing ideas and experiences with people who also believe in the power of books, reading, literacy and libraries.

The South African Centre for the Book, a unit of the National Library of South Africa, helped organize the visit from May 25 to June 4 in cooperation with Alterra Global Education Initiatives, an organization that specializes in educational and professional exchanges between South Africa and the United States.

The trip co-leaders, who shared responsibility for the professional planning and programming, were



Nancy E. Gwinn

Catherine Gourley, director of the Center for the Book's Letters About Literature program, encounters giraffes at the Mthethomusha game reserve.



Nancy E. Gwinn

At the top of the page, a pin commemorating 10 years of South African democracy is flanked by an architectural detail from the Johannesburg Public Library, whose staff met with their counterparts from the District of Columbia Public Library (above).

Judith R. Casey, an educator, board member of the Colorado Center for the Book and president of the Colorado Chapter of the International Reading Association (CCIRA), and this writer. Twenty-two teachers, librarians and reading promoters took part, including several associated with the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress: program specialist Anne Boni; Catherine Gourley, national director of the center's Letters About Literature program; Jean Trebbi, former director of the Florida Center for the Book; Allen Cronenberg, former director of the Alabama Center for the Book, and Lucinda Munger, former director of the South Carolina Center for the Book. In addition, Peggy Flynn, Angelisa Hawes and Liane Rosenblatt from the District of Columbia Public Library were part of the group.

A highlight was the May 28 visit to the South African Centre for the Book in Cape Town, an organization whose creation was inspired by the activities of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress.

Delegates also visited the National Library of South Africa (Cape Town and Pretoria campuses); the Manyano Secondary School in the township of Khayelitsha, near Cape Town; the 118-year-old Sea Point Primary School in Cape Town; and the University of the Western Cape in Bellville, where they heard a presentation by noted South

African author and journalist Antjie Krog (best known for "Country of My Skull," a book about South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission). Other visits were to the WesBank project, a program designed to support literacy and entrepreneurship in the township of WesBank, a low-income community near Cape Town. WesBank is supported by several staff members of the University of Western Cape School of Library Science; the South African Parliament, where the delegates watched part of a subcommittee meeting and met privately with an official from the Education Ministry; and the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria, where they learned about the embassy's support of educational and literacy initiatives within South Africa. At the Tetelo Secondary School in the township of Soweto, the group was greeted by the entire student body and treated to an early morning outdoor performance by the school choir. And at the meeting with South African public television, they learned about the organization's many educational and reading promotion initiatives, including "Takalani Sesame Street."

Delegates also participated with South African colleagues in symposia on two topics of mutual interest: reading and literacy promotion in South Africa, chaired in Cape Town by Gabrielle Ritchie, program executive, National Library of South Africa-Cape

